

CABINET

14 NOVEMBER 2025

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

A.5 THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME, DISCRETIONARY COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTIONS / DISCOUNTS / PREMIUMS FOR 2026/27 AND ANNUAL MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY STATEMENT 2026/27

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To enable Cabinet to consider and agree for recommending to Full Council the following:

- Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27
- Exceptional Hardship Policy
- Discretionary Council Tax Exemptions, Discounts and Premiums for 2026/27
- Annual MRP Policy Statement for 2026/27

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report outlines the proposed Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme and council tax exemptions, discounts and premiums for 2026/27.
- In terms of the LCTS scheme, it is proposed to continue with the principle of providing financial stability wherever possible to Tendring residents.
- It is therefore proposed to keep the 2026/27 LCTS scheme the same as this year, which provides for a maximum discount of 80% for working age claimants.
- The associated exceptional hardship policy has also been subject to annual review and it is not proposed to make any changes from the scheme operating this year and so remains available to support eligible claimants in 2026/27.
- In respect of existing discretionary council tax discounts, exemptions and premiums (including discounts for young people leaving care), it is not proposed to make any changes for 2026/27, with the same levels applying as in 2025/26.
- In respect of existing council tax premiums on long term empty properties, it is not proposed to make any changes for 2026/27, with the same levels applying as in 2025/26.
- In respect of the existing council tax premium of 100% on properties used as a second home, it is not proposed to make any changes for 2026/27, with the same levels applying as in 2025/26.
- As part of the extension to council tax premiums on long term empty properties and the introduction of council tax premiums on second homes last year, the Government stated that their intention was not to penalise property owners where they are making genuine efforts to make use of their properties. The Government therefore introduced mandatory

exceptions where the council tax premium on long term empty properties and/or second homes is not chargeable, and these remain in place for 2026/27.

- The Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement has also been reviewed for 2026/27, and no changes are proposed to the existing approach adopted from 2025/26.
- If it is agreed that no changes are necessary to the proposed LCTS scheme, there will be no need for public consultation. However, if any amendments are proposed and approved at Full Council in November 2025, then public consultation will be required before the final scheme can be agreed and adopted. Consequently, if consultation is required, this Council will have to notify the precepting authorities that the final council tax base will be delayed and not available until late in the budget cycle.
- Given the recommendation to continue with the existing LCTS scheme, it is not proposed to formally refer it to the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, but it will be considered by Full Council on 25 November 2025.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended:

- a) That Cabinet agrees that the LCTS scheme for 2026/27 remains the same as the current year, as set out as Appendix A and recommends to full Council:**
 - i) that the LCTS set out as Appendix A be approved with the maximum LCTS award being 80% for working age claimants;**
 - ii) that subject to a)i) above, delegation be given to the Corporate Director Finance and IT in consultation with the Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder to undertake the necessary steps to implement the LCTS scheme from 1 April 2026;**
- b) that Cabinet agrees the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Policy as set out in Appendix B;**
- c) that Cabinet agrees the discretionary Council Tax exemptions, discounts and premiums for 2026/27 as set out in the appendices and recommends to full Council:**
 - i) that the locally determined council tax discounts as set out in Appendix C be approved;**
 - ii) that the council tax discount policy for young people leaving care as set out in Appendix D be approved;**
 - iii) that the discretionary council tax premiums set out in Appendix E be approved;**
 - iv) that subject to c) above, delegation be given to the Corporate Director Finance and IT in consultation with the Finance and Governance**

Portfolio Holder to undertake the necessary steps to implement the council tax exemptions, discounts and premiums from 1 April 2026; and

d) that Cabinet recommends to Council that the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement for 2026/27 as set out in Appendix F be approved.

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

To enable the implementation of an LCTS Scheme in 2026/27 along with the required council tax discounts, exemptions and premiums and an MRP Policy Statement.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Considerations relating to the implementation of the various elements included within the recommendations above are set out within the main body of this report

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

In developing a local scheme, the Council must be mindful of their duties to vulnerable groups, and Council Taxpayers set against the Council's overall financial position.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable at this stage as no amendments to the LCTS scheme for 2026/27 are currently being proposed.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

| | | | |
|---|-----|---|--|
| Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here) | Yes | If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> Significant effect on two or more wards <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Involves £100,000 expenditure/income <input type="checkbox"/> Is otherwise significant for the service budget |
| | | And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date) | This item has been included within the Forward Plan for a period in excess of 28 days. |

The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013 provide the basis for the design and implementation of Local Council Tax Support Schemes.

In respect of the Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Policy, S13a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 allows Councils to reduce the amount of Council Tax payable. The same

legislation would also enable the Council to provide a council tax discount for young people leaving care.

The Local Government Finance Act 1992. Schedule 1A of the 1992 Act states that if a LCTS is revised or replaced, full consultation is required. As the recommendation is to continue with the current scheme for 2026/27, consultation is not required. However, should Council make any amendments to the scheme, consultation will be necessary before the scheme can be approved and adopted.

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) sets out relevant council tax exemptions and discounts (mandatory and discretionary). The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) sets out the various class of properties for the purpose of exemptions and discounts. Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 amended the Local Government Finance Act 1992 in respect of the Council Tax premiums that can be charged on long term empty properties (unoccupied for at least 1 year). The Local Government Finance Act 1992 was further amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, which also makes provision for Council Tax premiums that can be charged on properties occupied periodically ('second homes'). A summary of the premiums chargeable are as follows:

Long Term Empty Properties:

- For properties unoccupied and unfurnished for 1 year but less than 5 years – a maximum council tax premium of 100%.
- For properties unoccupied and unfurnished for 5 years but less than 10 years – a maximum council tax premium of 200%.
- For properties unoccupied and unfurnished for over 10 years – a maximum council tax premium of 300%.

Properties Occupied Periodically:

- A maximum council tax premium of 100%.

For the purposes of defining a long-term empty dwelling, on any day for a continuous period of at least 1 year if it has been unoccupied, and has been substantially unfurnished.

The Government may by regulation prescribe one or more classes of dwelling in relation to which a billing authority may not charge a premium. As part of their earlier decision-making processes, the Government stated that if such exceptions were delivered through non-statutory guidance, this may lead to inconsistency across England in the application of the premiums. Billing authorities would therefore be able to depart from guidance. Billing authorities have discretionary powers under section 13A of the 1992 Act to reduce council tax liability, however as these powers are discretionary, billing authorities may use them differently in different areas. For example, a certain class of dwelling in one area might be excluded from the premium in one area but treated differently in another area. Whilst billing authorities retain discretion over how they treat dwellings for premiums and discounts, the Government considered (following consultation) that certain statutory exceptions should apply across England. Separately, prescribing exceptions to the premium does not prevent local authorities from using their discretionary powers to reduce the additional council tax liability resulting from a premium. E.g., councils may have applied discretionary reductions in council tax liability which are more generous than the prescribed exceptions. Whilst this could result in local authorities taking

different decisions, the legislative approach ensures that the baseline exceptions in the prescribed classes will be apply across England.

Based on the above, the following mandatory exceptions are reflected in The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings and Consequential Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024, which cover both long-term empty properties and second homes as appropriate:

- In respect of the second homes premium – Class E and F (*dwellings that would otherwise be the sole or main residence of a member of the armed services, who is provided with a dwelling as a result of such service and a dwelling that forms part of single property that is being treated by a resident of that property as part of the main dwelling*)
- The following exception classes that relate to both the long-term empty homes and second homes premium:
 - a. Dwellings that are being marketed for sale, unless it has been such a dwelling for a period of one year or more. (Dwelling Class G)
 - b. Dwellings that are being market for rent, unless it has been such a dwelling for a period of one year or more (Dwelling Class H)
 - c. dwellings which have fallen in Class F of the Exempt Dwellings Order and have undergone probate (for a period of up to 12 months after the grant of probate). (Dwelling Class I)
- The following exception classes that relate to just the second homes premium:
 - a. Dwellings that are periodically occupied in certain job-related circumstances (Dwelling Class J)
 - b. Pitch occupied by a caravan, or a mooring occupied by a boat (Dwelling Class K)
 - c. Dwellings where a planning condition prevents permanent occupancy (Dwelling Class L)
- The following exception classes that relate to just the long-term empty homes premium:
 - a. Vacant dwellings that require or are undergoing major repair work to make them habitable, or are undergoing structural alterations (12 months limit). (Dwelling Class M)

The above are made under Section 11B and 11D of the 1992 Act which enables the Secretary of State to prescribe classes of dwellings to which the premiums would not apply. These exceptions are separate from the existing council tax exemptions under which certain dwellings are entirely exempt from council tax. The regulations took effect from November 2024, and the exceptions apply to premiums charged by billing authorities from 1 April 2025.

Consequential amendments to the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 have also been made to ensure that the second homes premium is taken into account in the administration of council tax and calculations made by local authorities in setting their local council tax.

The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) set out the requirements of a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement

which must be approved by Council each year. In calculating a prudent MRP provision, local authorities are required to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Revised guidance was issued under section 21(1A) of the Local Government Act 2003 in April 2024, which is applicable from 1 April 2025. The proposed MRP policy statement continues to reflect this latest guidance.

Local authorities may choose to pay more MRP than they consider prudent in any given year. If they do so they should separately disclose the in-year and cumulative amount of MRP overpaid in the statement presented to full council. There are no plans to do so in 2026/27 which is confirmed within the attached statement.

Local authorities can also vary the methodologies that they use to make prudent provision during the year. If they do so they should present a revised MRP statement to the next full Council or equivalent. Where a change in MRP methodology would impact on the value for money assessment of non-financial investments, the updated statement should summarise this impact.

| | |
|------------|--|
| Yes | The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below: |
|------------|--|

There are no further comments over and above those set out elsewhere in this report.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

LCTS scheme for 2026/27

As at the beginning of October 2025, the total estimated annual 'cost' of the LCTS scheme in 2025/26 is **£12,607m**, which is broadly in-line with the 'base' position budgeted for the year. Approximately 10% of this amount (**£1.260m**) falls to TDC with the remainder being met by the major preceptors. It is also worth highlighting that for every 5% decrease / increase in the discount the Council would gain / lose approximately **£50,000** to **£100,000** per year.

As the LCTS scheme is accounted for as a discount against the full council tax amount that would otherwise be payable on a domestic property, the estimated cost of the scheme forms part of the council tax property base calculations that are undertaken when developing the following year's budget. This will therefore be considered as part of the budget setting work currently underway for 2026/27, but it is important to highlight that it is proposed to continue with the underlying principle of not planning to reduce the discount rate as part of balancing the forecast, as the scheme remains an important mechanism to provide financial support to Tendring residents.

Council Tax Hardship Scheme

The cost of the exceptional hardship scheme is met by contributions from TDC and the major preceptors based on their respective proportion of the overall council tax bill. Therefore, TDC is required to meet approximately 10% of the cost of any award up to an annual aggregate total, which for 2025/26 is **£52,484**. For any awards over and above this annual amount, 100% of the cost is met by TDC.

The total current hardship budget in 2025/26 is **£456,600**, which consists of the underlying budget highlighted above, in addition to Government grant funding carried forward from prior years. Support to households will therefore continue to be made available via the hardship scheme and associated application process.

As no changes are proposed to either the LCTS Scheme or Hardship Policy in 2026/27, no unavoidable / additional underlying costs over and above those included within existing budgets or forecast are expected.

The Council Tax Collection fund continues to operate whereby any changes against the budget during the year will be 'rolled' forward and included in the following year's budget setting process.

Council tax exemptions, discounts and premiums for 2026/27

Similarly to the position for the LCTS Scheme above, as no changes are proposed to existing council tax discounts for 2026/27, including the policy for young people leaving care, no adjustments to the budget / forecast are expected.

In respect of the support to young people leaving care, the cost of the scheme remains relatively minimal, which is highlighted by the position at the end of September 2025 where the total cost was **£3,076**. The cost of this scheme can therefore continue to be accommodated within the wider calculation of the council tax base, each year.

Long Term Empty Property Premium

As highlighted in previous years, logically charging a 'premium' on long term empty properties would result in additional income being achieved. However, the intention of charging a 'premium' is to bring empty properties back into use following which the 'premium' would no longer be levied, the ultimate success of such an approach would therefore mean that no additional income would be realised. It is accepted that some homeowners choose not to bring their properties back into use even when a 'premium' is charged, but it is difficult to quantify this figure. It is therefore recognised that some property owners will accept paying the premium rather than taking an alternative option and additional income is therefore likely to be receivable. This will form part of the more detailed council tax setting and collection fund activities that are undertaken during the year.

However, a summary as at the end of September 2025 is as follows:

| Empty 'Banding' Period | Premium Due | Number of Properties Affected at the end of September last year | Number of Properties Affected at the end of September this year |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--|--|
| 1 to 5 Years | 100% | 391 | 479 |
| 5 to 10 Years | 200% | 37 | 51 |
| Over 10 Years | 300% | 17 | 14 |
| | | 445 | 544 |

Although the comparison to last year will reflect properties moving between 'bandings', the totals show an overall increase. The increase primarily relates to the 1 to 5 years band, which is likely to reflect those properties that are newly attracting a premium as they have been empty for more than one year. It is therefore reasonable to assume that there could be a potential 'time-lag' / 'churn' relating to when properties may be brought back into use following the property owners deciding to review their situation and responding accordingly once a premium becomes chargeable. The figures also undoubtedly reflects property owners that accept paying a council tax premium rather than bringing their property back into use. The Council has no

local discretion on the 'bandings' applied and is already charging the maximum percentages permitted.

The premium will also be chargeable to relevant properties within the HRA. Work remains ongoing to manage the level of long-term housing voids and any impact to the HRA from council tax premiums, which will continue to be considered as part of the wider HRA Business Planning Process.

Second Homes Premium

Similarly to long term empty property premiums, the decision to introduce a premium on second homes is aimed at incentivising alternative use of properties, so no additional income may be realised. However, it is acknowledged that some property owners will accept paying the premium rather than taking an alternative option and additional income is therefore likely to be receivable. This will form part of the more detailed council tax setting and collection fund activities that are undertaken during the year.

There has been a steady decline month by month since 1 April 2025 in the number of properties which are classed as a 'second home' indicating that there has been a shift in behaviour, which has resulted in more properties being brought back into use for occupation as someone's sole or main residence and therefore supports this Council's decision to adopt the Government's amendment to the Regulations allowing Local Authorities discretion to apply the premium. Based on the current position the number of properties where a second home council tax premium is chargeable is 909, a reduction of 138 since the 1 April 2025.

Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement (MRP)

In respect of the annual MRP policy statement, this sets out how the Council will make provision for the repayment of debt taken out to finance capital investment. For the General Fund, the MRP is a direct charge on the revenue budget. At present no MRP over and above the amount of principal being repaid is calculated for Housing Revenue Account capital investment, although future provision will be considered within the wider business planning process.

There are no changes to the Council's approach to calculating MRP and therefore, apart from any underlying change to the MRP calculation due to a change in the Capital Financing Requirement, there is no significant financial impact in 2026/27. The Council's current estimated General Fund Capital Financing Requirement as set out within the Annual Capital and Treasury Strategy that was presented to Full Council in May is summarised as follows:

| 2025/26 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| £4.515m | £4.356m | £4.182m |

The estimated General Fund MRP charge in 2025/26 based on the most up to date Capital Financing Requirement is **£0.295m**.

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| Yes | The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below: |
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The Section 151 Officer is the author of this report.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

| | |
|---|--|
| A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services; | This is addressed in the body of the report. |
| B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and | |
| C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services. | |
| MILESTONES AND DELIVERY | |
| The decisions set out in this report are required to be made in advance of the Final Budget Proposals being considered by Cabinet / Full Council in early 2026. This enables the associated calculations that support the council tax base and budget to be completed, which also need to be communicated to the Preceptors in a timely way so they can be reflected in their own budget setting processes. | |
| ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION | |
| <p>The LCTS Scheme affects low income working age families, and therefore a key risk is their ability to pay if the level of support awarded reduced which would have a knock on impact on the overall collection rate.</p> <p>The annual review process therefore seeks to balance such issues along with the Council's overall financial position and as highlighted elsewhere within this report, it is not proposed to make any amendments to the LCTS scheme in 2026/27, which therefore remains unchanged to support local households / residents.</p> | |
| EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS | |
| <p>These form part of the wider considerations and discussions elsewhere within this report.</p> <p>However, the LCTS scheme set out elsewhere within this report will not disproportionately impact on the following groups in that the relevant income will continue to be disregarded in calculating entitlement to support:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Families in receipt of child benefit; The Child Poverty Act 2010 ○ Disabled in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) / Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)/Personal Independence Payment(PIP); The Equality Act 2010 ○ War widows/disabled. The Armed Forces Covenant 2011 <p>The application of discounts and premiums are relevant to all properties across the District and it is considered that there are no equality and diversity implications specific to this issue.</p> <p>It is also important to highlight that the Government have acknowledged that there may be circumstances where it may not be appropriate to charge a council tax premium and a number of exceptions that they introduced in 2025/26 remain in place for 2026/27.</p> | |
| SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS | |
| These form part of the considerations and discussions elsewhere within this report as necessary. | |

IMPLICATIONS RELATED TO DEVOLUTION AND / OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Although there are no direct implications in terms of the proposals set out within this report relating to 2026/27, it is expected that working towards aligning policies and practices will be a key strand of work associated with progressing the various LGR actions and activities over the next two years.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050

There are not direct implications associated with this report.

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder

Health Inequalities

Area or Ward affected

There are no direct implications associated with this report.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

PROPOSED LCTS AND COUNCIL TAX HARDSHIP SCHEMES 2026/27

There are two parts to the LCTS scheme;

- one for pension age claimants where 100% support is provided
- one for working age claimants.

The Pension Age Scheme is set in accordance with rules laid down by the Government whereas the Working Age Scheme rules are decided locally by each local authority (billing authority).

Authorities must adopt a scheme on an annual basis, which must be agreed by 31 January each year for the subsequent year’s scheme.

LCTS is treated as a discount within the council tax calculations, which means that the Council’s taxbase is reduced (as will the taxbase for County, Fire and Police and Parishes).

The LCTS is therefore an annual ‘cost’ met within the Council’s overall financial position / budget each year. Any increase in the discount would therefore be treated as a cost pressure and conversely, any reduction in the level of discount would reduce the Council’s net costs. However, the level of discount given is not primarily a financial decision as one of the primary drivers is the level of financial support that the scheme provides to households across the district, which in turn needs to be considered in the wider demographic / economic position for the area.

The Council recognises the on-going impact on residents from welfare reforms and cost of living challenges, so it is proposed to maintain the maximum discount at 80% for working age claimants. In terms of the overall scheme, no changes are proposed with the scheme remaining the same as 2025/26 - the scheme for 2026/27 is set out as **Appendix A**.

As part of previous year's decision making, the potential exploration of alternative options in terms of the underlying design of the scheme was discussed, with one such option based on a 'banding' approach. It is understood that some local authorities have adopted such an approach, which will inherently create 'winners' and 'losers' in terms of the financial support awarded. The Council's current scheme continues to be based on a means tested approach, which although likely to be more administratively burdensome and potentially duplicate effort for prospective claimants who may have to provide the same information to the DWP if claiming other financial support, it is felt that it provides the basis for a potentially fairer system.

Notwithstanding the above, such alternative approaches will be kept under review, especially as part of the work associated with LGR highlighted earlier, but the current means tested approach is proposed to continue for 2026/27.

For information, statistics relating to the LCTS scheme in 2025/26 are set out below:

As at the end of September 2025:

There are currently 11,370 household receiving LCTS.

The total working age households receiving support is 5657.

The total pensioner households receiving support is 5713.

Council Tax Hardship Scheme

The Council has operated a council tax exceptional hardship policy since the inception of the LCTS scheme.

As highlighted during previous reviews of the policy, as with any exceptional hardship scheme, it is difficult to define exceptional hardship or descriptive criteria that will apply, as there may be a number of variables to consider when an application is made. However, the policy continues to set out broad guidelines, which promotes transparency and openness in the Council's decision making processes. The policy also has a focus on 'reasonable' expenditure and affordability for the claimant and is based on evidence that they are also being proactive themselves in managing the situation. This mirrors the same approach that continues to be applied to discretionary housing payments where in consultation with the Department for Works and Pensions, support is focused on those claimants who are seeking employment for example.

The policy continues to highlight that a senior officer will review all decisions to demonstrate fairness and consistency to the application process.

It is not proposed to amend the existing scheme for 2026/27.

PROPOSED COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS, EXEMPTIONS AND PREMIUMS 2026/27

Discounts and Exemptions

There are a number of mandatory exemptions and discounts available, with only a limited number of classes of dwelling where there is local discretion - these relate to 4 classes of

unoccupied dwelling and for 2026/27 it is proposed to keep the level of discount at the same level as 2025/26 as set out in **Appendix C**.

As was the case last year, by leaving the current level of discounts / exemptions unchanged it supports the stability of the council tax base, which is one of the Council's core income streams within the forecast.

Council tax income raised following the impact of the locally determined discounts also has the additional benefit of increasing the contribution receivable from the major preceptors, with the current tax sharing agreement potentially continuing in 2026/27, which is based on total council tax income collectable.

A council tax policy was introduced in 2022/23 to support young people leaving care. It is proposed to continue with an unchanged policy going into 2026/27, which is set out in **Appendix D**.

Premium on Long Term Empty Properties

As a key driver to bring empty properties back into use, the Government allows Local Authorities to levy a council tax 'premium' on long term empty properties and is currently applied across 3 'bands' based on the length of time the property has been unoccupied for. The Government sets a maximum 'premium' that can be charged against each of the 3 'bands', with the highest amount being 300% for a property that has been empty for over 10 years.

The existing chargeable premiums are set out in **Appendix E** and it is proposed that these remain unchanged for 2026/27.

Premium on Second Homes (Properties Occupied Periodically)

A council tax premium of 100% on second homes was introduced by the Council from 1 April 2025.

As part of the Government's introduction of the associated legislation that allows Council's to levy such a premium, they recognised the impact that second homes can have on communities, particularly where a significant proportion of properties are not occupied all year round. Large numbers of such properties can contribute to housing supply pressures and risk the sustainability of local services e.g. large concentrations of second homes reduce the size of the permanent population, which can lead to unfavourable impacts on the local economy / local services.

In terms of second homes (and long-term empty properties) the Government introduced the necessary regulations that recognised that the premiums were not intended to penalise owners who were making a genuine effort to make use of the properties, with a number of mandatory exceptions introduced.

Following the introduction of the second homes premium in 2025/26 there has only been a limited level of feedback regarding its introduction, with the main issues raised being:

- that they stay at their properties for significant parts of the year and therefore contribute to the local area and that the introduction of a second home premium is not justified on this basis.
- that due to the current unstable market, properties were more difficult to sell within the 12-month exception to achieve their market value.

- properties with restrictions such as those available to 'over 60's' have a smaller market audience to sell to.

Although the above points are appreciated, the Government's introduction of mandatory exceptions were designed to provide a level of reasonable support that broadly addresses the points raised and therefore it is not proposed to extend these exceptions at a local level.

It is also important to highlight the Council's policy background behind the introduction of a second homes premium from 1 April 2025. Amongst a number of existing strategies / policies, the Council's Housing Strategy and Economic Strategy are key documents with some key elements as follows:

- The identification of housing need and demand within the district.
- Strategic priorities including delivering the type and quality of housing the district needs, which meets the aspirations of residents and promotes economic growth in the district.
- Making the best use of and improving existing housing within the district.
- Recognising the link between population and economic growth in Tendring.
- Increases in population and housing support a stronger labour market and increased local spending

As highlighted earlier, there has been a significant reduction in the number of second homes in the district following the introduction of the second homes premium from 1 April 2025, which therefore supports and makes a valuable and on-going contribution to the above priorities and aspirations.

The existing chargeable premium is set out in **Appendix E** and it is proposed it remains unchanged for 2026/27.

Other Considerations

As highlighted in previous years, the Council does from time to time receive other general feedback from residents or other third parties in terms of council tax discounts and premiums.

Apart from the feedback highlighted above regarding the introduction of a council tax premium on second homes, no other relevant / significant issues have been received.

Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement (AMRP)

Attached as **Appendix F** is the proposed Annual MRP policy statement for 2026/27 that sets out how assets funded by borrowing are accounted for, which is required to be approved by Full Council each year.

The policy sets out how the Council will make provision for the eventual repayment of any borrowing undertaken to finance capital expenditure. A number of changes were made to the policy last year to reflect updated Government guidance. There are no additional changes required this year with the policy therefore remaining unchanged from that agreed for 2025/26.

The timing of approval of the MRP is to enable it to be taken into account when setting the budget for 2026/27 over the coming months.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

The Local Council Tax Support Scheme, Discretionary Council Tax Exemptions / Discounts / Premiums for 2025/26 and Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2025/26 Report – Item A.2 Full Council 26 November 2024

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

APPENDICES

Appendix A Proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme (summary) 2026/27

Appendix B Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Policy

Appendix C Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions 2026/27

Appendix D Care Leavers Council Tax Discount Policy

Appendix E Council Tax Premiums 2026/27

Appendix F Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2026/27

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